



Visions for a Healthier Community

Northland Food Planning Group, Summer 2015

Report prepared by Local Matters



Local Matters

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Through a partnership led by the City of Columbus, Franklin County Commissioners and Local Matters, (a Columbus nonprofit organization committed to improving healthy food access and education) two meetings were held in Northland with community organizations, stakeholders and residents to explore neighborhood-specific solutions and define potential next steps for improving access to healthy food, food production, and food education in the area.

The Northland neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio is located north of downtown Columbus, Ohio and includes the area east of Interstate 71 and within the Interstate 270 outer belt. Home to one of the largest concentrations of Somali refugees in the United States, the area also is comprised of a number of other African, Hispanic, Asian and South Asian immigrants. Once an area of robust economic activity, the Northland Mall area has experienced a decline in residential wealth and traditional businesses; the exodus of more affluent residents to the outer suburbs has also greatly impacted the area. A burgeoning economy of food-related businesses established by the immigrant population has and will continue to be a key element in the neighborhood's revitalization.

With that in mind, the primary goals of the two-meeting community engagement process were:

- *To collect, share, gather and organize information on food-related neighborhood assets - such as food education, and food access - identified by participants.*
- *To map points of healthy food access and education that illustrate gaps and opportunities for improvement based on community need.*
- *To engage individuals in generating visions of what they want and need in their community relative to food access, food production, and food education.*
- *To make recommendations for next steps according to the priorities identified by the neighborhood food planning process participants*

This report provides information on the processes, data, and ideas for exploration shared during the community-engagement process. It will assist participants in the development and implementation of local strategies for improving access that meet the specific needs of the Northland neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. The information and planning gained in the Northland neighborhood will be combined with that of the West Side, Near East Side, Near South Side, Weinland Park, Clintonville, and Linden reports to help inform a Columbus-Franklin County Local Food Action Plan (expected completion Fall 2016). This plan will outline a comprehensive strategy to:

- *Improve access to nutritious and affordable food, and education about healthy food.*
- *Increase the role of food in economic development.*
- *Prevent food-related waste.*
- *Enhance communication and coordination among existing food resources and agencies.*

OUR PROCESS



Local Matters has facilitated and organized the development of a neighborhood food plans on the West Side, Near East Side, Near South Side, Weinland Park, Clintonville, and Linden neighborhoods of Columbus, Ohio, and used similar strategies for community engagement and participation in Northland. The first phase of the community engagement process for the *Columbus-Franklin County Local Food Action Plan* project in Northland was to identify participants that represented a cross-section of the community. In addition to organizations and individuals who had previously been engaged in similar food planning efforts, outreach efforts for participation in the meetings were expanded to include residents, business owners, community leaders and community stakeholders. This approach provided a diverse mix of perspectives and ensured that the community's collective voices were represented during the process.

MEETING 1: MAY 4, 2015 AT FCDJFS

The primary purpose of the first meeting was to engage community leaders, business owners, service providers and residents to identify ideas for improving the local food economy. The secondary purpose of the meeting was to map food-based assets – food access, food production and food education – including providers and locations in Northland and to brainstorm ideas for collective vision for improving access in the area.

During Meeting 1, participants were encouraged to consider their opinions about the importance of food during a group exercise called "Food Is...". Participants were split into three randomly assigned groups and asked to consider one of three topics: "food is life", "food is love" and "food is money". Groups then shared their perspectives in support of each statement, which allowed participants to explore the many different ways we view food and consider how differing individual opinions could be incorporated to support a collective idea. This activity brought everyone's perspective into the room and encouraged a robust exchange of stories.

The next step in the community-engagement process included participant mapping of food-based assets: food access, food production and food-education providers and locations most frequented or known to meeting participants. Participants then brainstormed ideas for improving healthy food access in their community, focusing on alleviating gaps in food access, education and resources. These ideas and opportunities were further refined in Meeting 2.

Lessons learned/Observations

- The group included a large number of representatives from Northland civil society organizations
- Participants enjoyed the mapping exercise and were quite familiar with their neighborhood
- Northland spans a large geographic. Participants identified two key areas - Northland 1 (West) and Northland 2 (East) – with Cleveland Ave and Westerville Road as the dividing line
 - Northland goes as far east as Hamilton Road and includes Easton but many in Northland 1 don't shop or eat in Easton
 - There are many more higher-end food and grocery locations in Northland 2
 - Easton (and east of Easton) is not considered as a part of Northland by many residents
- There are only two full-service grocery stores for the large area north of Morse Road between I-71 and I-270
 - This area includes a large number of fast service and fast food restaurants
 - Many residents shop outside of the Northland area for food due to safety and food quality issues
- There are a significant number of ethnic grocery stores with high-quality food in the area
 - Produce is much better in these stores
 - The quality of these local ethnic stores takes people away from local chains
 - The 'Food Is' exercise seemed to open people up and bring stories to the surface
 - The mapping exercise felt like a huge success – people really jumped in and participated
- Participants were unable to identify any food education sites or organizations in the area
- Northland is home to many older residents and apartment dwellers without cars – this suggests a need for a better transportation network that can get people to and from grocery stores and food pantries
- There are a large number of residents who are immigrants

Significant Successes

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Identification of neighborhood-specific issues and challenges	Open dialogue format, discussion of unique community challenges
Identification of how current community resources and assets can be used to build a stronger food community	Working Group Conversation (individuals sharing their roles and experiences), Small group mapping exercise

MEETING 2: JUNE 9, 2015 AT FCDJFS

The second meeting provided participants an opportunity to continue to explore possibilities for improving food access as well as opportunities to work together to develop community-specific suggestions and solutions. The top five ideas for improving food access, education, resources and opportunities (discussed at length on Page 10) were then further revised and condensed to three actionable goals the group would like to explore for improving healthy food access and education:

- **Goal 1: Establish a farmers' market.**
- **Goal 2: Create community gardens throughout the Northland area with space for anyone who wants to garden.**
- **Goal 3: Utilize or tear down abandoned businesses/old chain stores and restaurants and transform the land into green space, food based businesses and education sites.**

Lessons learned/Observations

- The size and sociodemographic diversity of the Northland geographic area presents a unique challenge in determining the best use of resources to improve the area.
- Participants were surprised by how prevalent fast food businesses were in the area.
- Many of the area's immigrant population are not fluent in English; however, given the vast ESL resources and providers with bilingual staff, does not present a challenge.
- Participants were able to identify food-education sites during the map review process; during the first session, participants thought these sites did not exist.

Significant Successes

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Streamlining of top 5 visions to 3 goals	Open dialogue format, discussion of unique community challenges and best use of existing resources
Identification of how current community resources and assets can be used to build a stronger food community	Working group conversation, small group visioning exercise provided participants with an opportunity to further explore the feasibility of their ideas

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS DURING THE MEETINGS

"Empty buildings on Morse and 161 could be used as classrooms for different educational and healthy cooking opportunities."

"Nothing expresses love more than when someone cooks for you or you for them".

"When the refrigerator is full of good food it feels like I'm taking care of my family".

"I have a vision of 6-8 huge gourmet kitchens in a building paired with a diabetes/chronic disease education".

"I love farming but there is no space".

"Folks are traveling outside of Northland to go to other chain groceries because the local chains are not being kept up in the same way"

"We express love through food; we reach out to others through food".

"Bringing people together for a community meal with all the diversity and inclusiveness that Northland can offer [is my vision]."

"Families cooking together expresses love".

NORTHLAND FOOD MAP – NORTHLAND 1 (WEST)



MAP LEGEND – NORTHLAND 1 (WEST)

COMMUNITY GARDENS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Church of Good Shepherd United Methodist Church | 5. Community Garden |
| 2. Woodward Park Garden | 6. Feddersen Community Recreation Center |
| 3. Ascension Lutheran Church Garden | 7. Community Garden |
| 4. Brookhaven Community Garden | 8. Mid-Ohio Food Bank Produce Garden |
| | 9. Community Garden |

CORNER/DISCOUNT STORES

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 10. Sunoco | 17. Turkey Hill Mini Market |
| 11. Circle K | 18. Shangri-La Corner Store |
| 12. CVS | 19. Shell |
| 13. Walgreens | 20. Speedway |
| 14. Speedway | 21. Marathon Gas |
| 15. BP/Duchess Shoppe | 22. Sunderland Food Mart |
| 16. Speedway | |

FOOD EDUCATION SITES

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 23. Karl Road Library | 24. North YMCA |
|-----------------------|----------------|

FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 25. Dairy Queen | 37. McDonald's |
| 26. Wendy's | 38. Dairy Queen |
| 27. Rally's | 39. Taco Bell |
| 28. Subway | 40. Mark Pi's Express |
| 29. Arby's | 41. Wendy's |
| 30. Burger King | 42. Gyro Express |
| 31. KFC | 43. KFC |
| 32. McDonald's | 44. Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen |
| 33. Dunkin' Donuts | 45. White Castle |
| 34. Wendy's | 46. Taco Bell |
| 35. Tim Horton's | |
| 36. Long John Silver's | |

GROCERY STORES

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 47. Giant Eagle | 54. Aaran Discount Center |
| 48. Carfagna's | 55. Aldi |
| 49. Mi Bandera Supermarket | 56. Kroger |
| 50. Save-A-Lot | 57. Bista Brothers Asian Grocery |
| 51. Saraga International Grocery | 58. South Asian Bazaar |
| 52. Kroger | 59. Roses |
| 53. La Michoacana Meat Market | |

PANTRIES AND MEAL SITES

- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| 60. Epworth United Methodist Church |
|-------------------------------------|

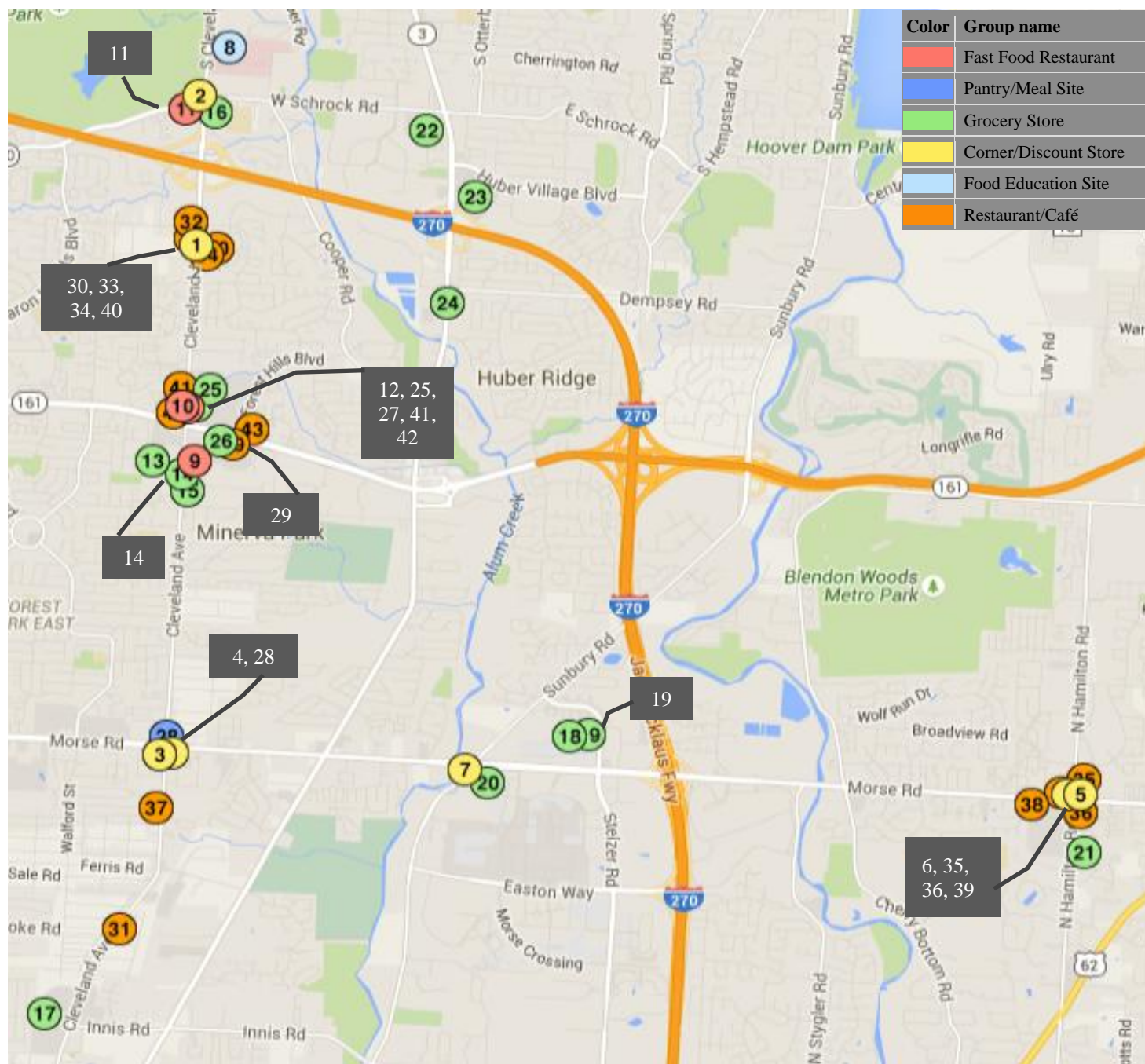
RESTAURANTS/CAFÉS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 61. Bob Evans | 70. Haitian & American Restaurant |
| 62. Casa Hacienda Grill | 71. Yogi's Hoagies & Dairy Bar |
| 63. Super Seafood Buffet | 72. Namaste Indo-Nepali Cuisine |
| 64. Red Lobster | 73. Little Caesars Pizza |
| 65. Udupi Café | 74. Drellyse African Restaurant |
| 66. Jeddo Kabab | 75. Donatos Pizza |
| 67. Hunan House | 76. Gabby's Bar |
| 68. Chipotle | 77. Dabakh Restaurant |
| 69. China Dynasty | 78. African Paradise Restaurant |

- 79. Global Mall
- 80. Ginevra Café
- 81. Bruno's Restaurant
- 82. Skyline Chili
- 83. Pizza Hut
- 84. McDonald's
- 85. Domino's Pizza
- 86. Ange's Pizza

- 87. Penn Station
- 88. Happy's Pizza
- 89. Massey's Pizza
- 90. Sequoia and The Volleypark
- 91. Papa John's Pizza
- 92. Ginza Go
- 93. Buckeye Crazy Restaurant & Sports Bar
- 94. Borgata Pizza Café

NORTHLAND FOOD MAP – NORTHLAND 2 (EAST)



MAP LEGEND – NORTHLAND 2 (EAST)

CORNER/DISCOUNT STORES

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Turkey Hill Mini Market | 5. Speedway |
| 2. Speedway | 6. BP |
| 3. Walgreens | 7. United Dairy Farmers |
| 4. CVS | |

FOOD EDUCATION SITES

8. Mount Carmel St. Ann's Hospital

FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 9. Steak 'n Shake | 11. Wendy's |
| 10. Subway | 12. Tim Horton's |

GROCERY STORES

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 13. Meijer | 21. Giant Eagle |
| 14. Yasmin Market | 22. Kroger |
| 15. Gordon Food Service (GFS) | 23. Marc's |
| 16. Raisin Rack Natural Food Market | 24. Aldi |
| 17. Kroger | 25. Columbus Square Farmers' Market |
| 18. Walmart Supercenter | 26. Hamdi Grocery |
| 19. Sam's Club | 27. Salam Market & Bakery |
| 20. Target | |

PANTRIES AND MEAL SITES

28. Vineyard Church Food Pantry

RESTAURANTS/CAFÉS

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 29. Fiesta Jalisco | 37. Ethiopia & Somali Restaurant |
| 30. Yannis Greek Grill | 38. Papa John's Pizza |
| 31. Addis Restaurant | 39. Starbucks |
| 32. O'Charley's | 40. Scramble Marie's |
| 33. Rancho Alegre | 41. Fujiyama Japanese Steakhouse |
| 34. Tikka Masala & Grill | 42. Roosters |
| 35. Olive Garden | 43. Marco's Pizza |
| 36. Bob Evans | |

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS ON MAPPING

- Several sites that could be considered “fast food” (such as pizza shops) were identified as “restaurants/cafés” since they provide sit-down seating.
- Participants noted there are no community gardens in Northland 2 (East).
- Northland 1(West) has far more fast food restaurants than Northland 2 (East); however, both areas have limited access to healthy food.

PLACES RESIDENTS ACCESS FOOD OUTSIDE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

**Distance calculated from the meeting location – Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services (FCDJFS) – Northland Opportunity Center (1721 Northland Park Avenue Columbus, Ohio 43229)*

GROCERY STORES

Giant Eagle 3.67 miles 1000 E. Dublin-Granville Road Columbus, OH 43229

Marc's 5.78 miles 111 Huber Village Road Westerville, OH 43081

Kroger (Worthington) 7.99 miles 60 Worthington Mall Worthington, OH 43085

Kroger (Westerville) 10.8 miles 7345 State Route 3 Westerville, OH 43082

VISIONS FOR A HEALTHIER FOOD COMMUNITY

Meetings 1 and 2 provided participants an opportunity to share ideas and develop a collective vision for improving food access, availability and education in their community. In Meeting 1, participants began the visioning process by individually preparing a list of ideas, which were then shared with the group. Of the ideas presented, several topics overlapped and revealed the key goals of the overall group. In Meeting 2, participants worked together to narrow their ideas down to three actionable goals for the future. The numbers in parentheses after each idea indicate the number of participants who shared related ideas during the group session. Sub-topics, which are featured below, represent specific, yet unique, supporting visions raised by participants. Visions appearing **in bold text** reflect the top 6 ideas based on participant responses.

Visions for Education

1. **Utilize local farms and gardens as free educational centers on gardening and nutrition. (7)**
 - a. Additional classes that address community needs, such as ESL, job training for culinary and farm employment, self-sufficiency and business should also be provided (5)
 - b. Education should be focused on establishing backyard gardens with foods native to this area.
2. Provide free community education about the importance of fruits, vegetables and a healthy diet to overall health. (3)
 - a. Education should include information for preparing and cooking healthy for diabetics.
3. Host hands-on cooking demos in grocery stores and/or churches.

Visions for Increased Access to Healthy Food

1. **Establish a farmers' market. (8)**
 - a. Sell surplus produce from community garden space in farmers market. (5)
 - b. Offer organic food grown by community members.
 - c. Located on Morse Road near Northland area.
 - d. Allocate space specifically for refugee farmers and international food growers; this will increase cultural awareness in the broader community.
2. **Improve transportation to food – more buses on 161, and more and safer sidewalks. (5)**
 - a. Provide specific resources for apartment dwellers.
3. Host community-wide meals and potlucks to build community and break down walls (3)
4. Increase hours and number of pantries/meal sites that provide regular access to healthy, fresh foods.
5. Provide options for ethnic food preferences based on community demand.
6. Offer healthier food options in restaurants.

Visions for Production/Gardening

1. **Create community gardens throughout the Northland area with space for anyone who wants to garden. (7)**
 - a. Provide specific resources for apartment dwellers who want to grow their own food. (2)
2. Start a farming cooperative that includes plots for refugee farmers.
3. Raise livestock (goats, chickens) for local consumption.
4. Build wall gardens on the sides of businesses.

Visions for Food Waste

1. Utilize food waste from local restaurants on local farms and gardens. (2)
2. Arrange for salvageable food waste to be distributed at pantries and meal sites.

Visions for Communication

1. Provide information about community events in different languages (Somali, Nepali, etc).

Visions for Community Partnerships/Business Development

1. **Utilize or tear down abandoned businesses/old chain stores and restaurants and transform the land into green space. (4)**
 - a. Provide opportunities for learning about small-scale food production.
2. Establish “healthy corners” and community gathering places (2).
3. Host a “Taste of Northland” event to highlight local foods/businesses (2)
4. Designate a food court area at one of local shopping areas with space for food vendors from different ethnic groups using farm produce.
5. Create a meal delivery program for housebound seniors/disabled.
6. Establish a nonprofit grocery store.
7. Establish a food incubator modeled after the research/trial place near Bowling Green that could serve as a hub for the greater community to learn about different foods
8. Attract more local small family grocery stores in the neighborhoods to improve access to food and reduce reliance on transportation.

Miscellaneous

1. Establish safe places for kids to play throughout Northland.
2. Host an international food crawl or challenge (similar to a pub crawl).

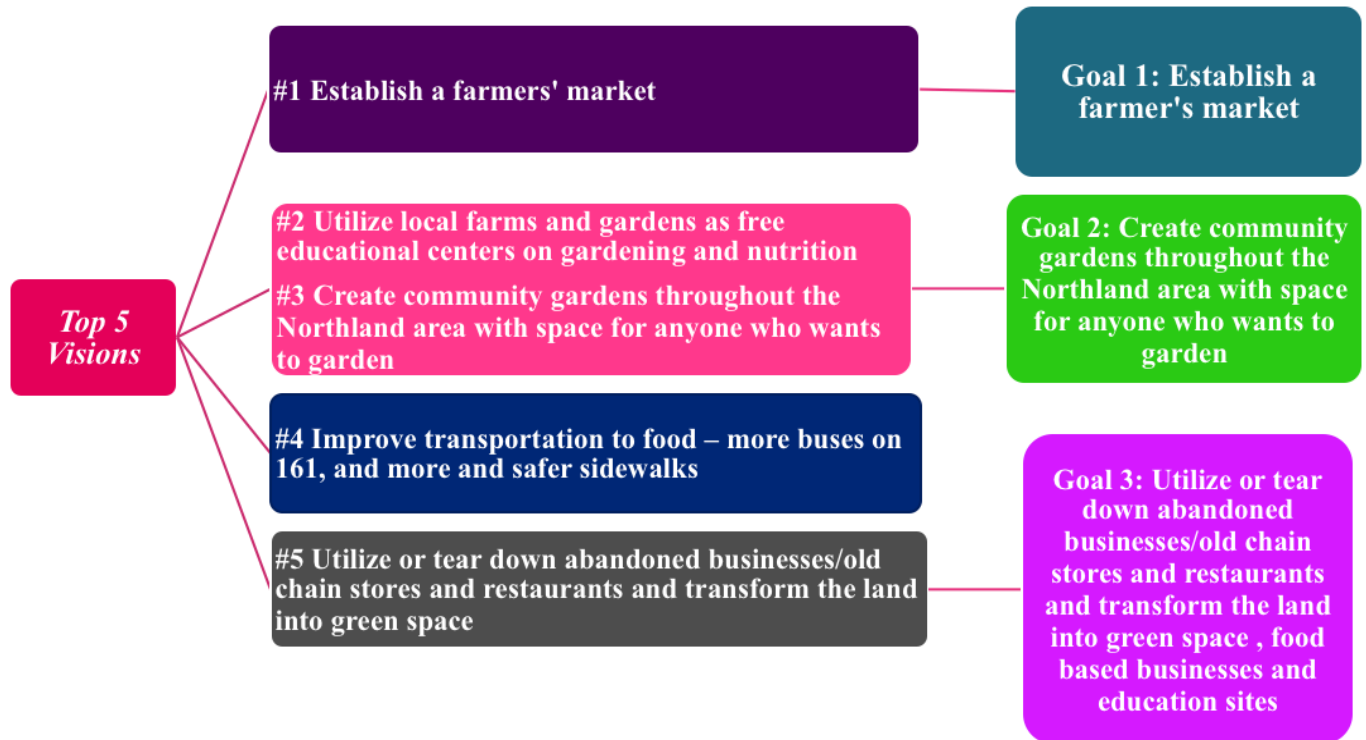
TOP FIVE IDEAS FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY OF CHOICE

During Meeting 1, participants also explored the feasibility, affordability and popularity of the ideas presented. The top five ideas for exploration that emerged from Meeting 1 included:



FINAL PRIORITIES/GOALS FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

During Meeting 2, participants refined the top five visions list to three goals. Noting the similarities, complexities and longer timeline for achieving all five goals, the group chose to concentrate their efforts on shorter term, actionable goals that reflected the top five ideas. The top five ideas were combined as follows:



Goal 1: Establish a farmers' market

- Utilize parking lots in Northland strip mall for markets.
- Invest profits from community gardens for upkeep, supplies, etc.
- Establish a network with farmers, gardeners and community gardens.
 - Network with farmers to acquire surplus for low-income families.
 - Invite community gardens from outside Northland to farmers' market to increase competition and keep prices low.
 - Establish a community garden network that would provide information on what's being planted and when it will be available.
- Work with Kroger, Meijer, and other large grocery retailers for surplus food for resale at the market.

Goal 2: Create community gardens throughout the Northland area with space for anyone who wants to garden

- Support the local food economy through the community gardens.
 - This would be a good way for refugee families to obtain and sell food that would improve their health and finances.
 - Establish an intergenerational recreation and farming cultural connection that would aid in cultural integration.
 - Low income and underserved populations will utilize their skills, ideas and talents to grow fresh produce for the larger community.
 - Provide families with legal and technical assistance to bring their produce to the appropriate markets.
- Mobilize existing resources (space/land, water, manure, and seeds) and educational providers to interested

families.

- Nutrition and balanced diet education needs to be provided that supports home cooking, community building, environmental preservation and population control.
- Coordinate with zoning and landscaping department to increase the availability of land and space.
- Increase access to fresh produce.

Goal 3: Utilize or tear down abandoned businesses/old chain stores and restaurants and transform the land into green space and other food based businesses and education sites

- Identify buildings that can be turned into green space or repurposed.
- Find a building/space for a global/international food marketplace.
- Identify locations accessible to transportation.
- Provide access to all developed options.

NEXT STEPS

As a result of the small group meetings, the participants expressed their desire to focus on one of the ideas presented: local economic empowerment initiatives that improve food access. Future exploration of these ideas will be continued by community members, who will lead the efforts to bring the plans brought forth in the community meetings to fruition with continued engagement of food access working group members and other interested stakeholders.

The City of Columbus, Franklin County Commissioners and Local Matters will use the information contained in this report for continued engagement of participants in the development and implementation of local strategies that represent the meeting participants' collective vision for improving access that also meets the specific needs of the Northland neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. The information and planning gained in the Northland neighborhood will be combined with that of the Near East Side, Near South Side, West Side, Weinland Park, Clintonville and Linden reports to help inform a Columbus-Franklin County Local Food Action Plan (expected completion Fall 2016). Additional information and updates will be provided online at www.local-matters.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION: CASE STUDIES AND TEMPLATES

CASE STUDY: NEW YORK CITY

Several New York City organizations and agencies are involved in turning abandoned lots into gardens that educate community members about how to grow food. They also provide food education and cultural events at these gardens. and provide other healthy food education. Information about these groups can be found in this article-

<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20130724/south-jamaica/community-gardens-turn-once-derelict-spaces-into-green-oases>

CASE STUDY: ZENGER FARM – PORTLAND, OR

Portland's only internationally focused market, LIFM provides fresh, affordable, and culturally unique produce to the diverse Lents community and offers farm-direct sales opportunities for immigrant, emerging farmers, and new business owners. <http://zengerfarm>

TEMPLATES: PROJECT PLANNING TOOL

Project planning is a discipline for stating how to complete a project within a certain timeframe, usually with defined stages, and with designated resources. One tool for project Planning and management follows:

PROJECT PLANNING TOOL

Example - West Side (Franklinton & Hilltop)

Vision

We are a strongly connected and informed network of residents, organizations, places of worship, and businesses, strengthening access to healthy food and food education in Columbus' Westside Neighborhoods.

1st Project Goal

Create safe and pleasant community gathering spaces around healthy food production, access and education.

Task 1

- **Explore bringing a large-scale community grocer, co-op, or food hub with opportunities for education and business incubation to Franklinton and Hilltop.**

Task 2 - Develop a healthy food communication network for the West Side, which includes information and resources about healthy food access, education, and production.

Planning your Project

-

Planning your Project

Identify the problem: What gap or barrier are you trying to address?

- Problem
- Barriers

List some reasons that you think this problem might exist.

What approach will you take to solving or mitigating this problem?

Project Goal:

Secondary goal:

Project Strategy:

Desired outcome(s):

Key Players:

Projected timeline:

Resources needed:

How will you know if this project has been successful?